

Nashville District

Human Resources Newsletter

"News You Can Use"

Issue 15-04-01
15 April 2004

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep Nashville District employees informed about personnel issues, concerns, and topics. You are encouraged to review the information and disseminate to your organization. If there are particular areas of interest that you would like to see addressed in future issues, an article of general interest, or general comments, please contact John Restey at 615-736-5538 or John.G.Restey@lrn02.usace.army.mil.

Coming Events:

TSP OPEN SEASON: April 15-June 30 2004

General News:

DOD National Security Personnel System Implementation Rolling Out Slowly

DOD will spend several years shifting employees to its new personnel system. Under the current plan, some Defense employees will change to a six-month pilot personnel system in July of next year. The first group will be substantial in number and broadly representative of the department's workforce.

After the pilot test is completed, Defense will evaluate it and make changes before launching a 12-month pilot, which also will be followed by an evaluation. A third group will be phased in starting in late 2006, bringing the total of Defense employees under the new system to 300,000 by then.

At that point, the department must seek approval from the Office of Personnel Management to expand the system to the remaining 400,000 of its civilian workforce

Defense plans to consult widely with employee groups and OPM, and will post its changes in the *Federal Register*. The first proposal -- for a new labor relations system -- will go out in November, followed by a proposed rule for a new human resources system in January 2005. **TAKEN FROM GOVEXEC.COM BY Shawn Zeller**

Vacancies in IRAQ

Vacancies at the Gulf Region Division (GRD) are now being posted on the CPOL website. There are only a few jobs on the board now but there will be many in the future.

Instructions to access these announcements are below.

There are two avenues for accessing Army Vacancies, one is through CPOL and the other is USA jobs, outlined instructions for accessing both websites are as follows:

<<http://www.cpol.army.mil>>

1. Log into cpol.army.mil, Click Employment;
2. Click Army's Vacancy Announcements, this will take you to the Vacancy Announcement Board;
3. Once you are at the Vacancy Announcements Board, scroll down to "Country", highlight Iraq.
4. If a current Federal Employee click on "get results", the Vacancy Announcements for Iraq will be listed.

<<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>>

1. Log into usajobs; click on Search Jobs;
 2. Click Agency Search, scroll down agency, enter U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
 3. Scroll down to Location Search; highlight "middle East", this will include positions in Iraq;
 4. Scroll down to Applicant Eligibility; if current Federal employee, mark "yes";
 5. Click Search for Jobs; Vacancy announcements for Iraq will be listed.
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Health and Benefits:

TSP OPEN SEASON (APRIL 15-JUNE 30)

Read on for the current TSP Open Season. Please provide the widest dissemination possible.

The effective dates for TSP Open Season elections are below:

Action Completed
April 15th-June 12th

Effective Date
June 13th

Date on LES
July 8th

June 13th-June 26th
June 27-June 30th

June 27th
July 11th

July 22nd
August 5th

OPM Reports to Congress on Agency Payments of Flexible Spending Account Fees

Nearly four times as many new FSA enrollments in '04 compared to '03

Washington, D.C. -- The U.S. Office of Personnel Management recently submitted a report to Congress offering the first look at the cost of administrative fees agencies will pay to cover employees enrolled in a flexible spending account.

OPM Director Kay Coles James noted the increased rates of participation in the program and said employees benefit from pre-tax contributions to flexible spending accounts (FSA), while agencies derive benefits from reduced payroll taxes that go well beyond the fees they pay on behalf of employees.

"Employees benefit because untaxed contributions from their salaries are deposited into their FSA accounts, and the lower employee taxable income translates into agencies paying out less in Social Security and Medicare taxes," said James. "And because agencies pay less in taxes, they more than recover the cost of paying FSA administrative fees."

James added: "Employees have embraced FSAs and have demonstrated both the ability and interest in using their hard-earned dollars effectively to manage health-care costs. Federal workers are well-informed, health-care consumers and understand the importance of FSAs."

OPM Director James Announces Another Wave of Improvements to USAJOBS Website

Job posting process is focus of improvements

WASHINGTON - U.S. Office of Personnel Management Director Kay Coles James today announced the implementation of new improvements to the USAJOBS website. The purpose of the improvements is to enhance the job posting process for federal recruiters and to standardize job announcements.

"The new job posting template will help agencies post their jobs more easily," said Director James. "There will be a step-by-step process for entering the job description, duties, qualifications and application information. In addition, the jobs will be presented to job seekers in such a way that provides a concise overview of each job on the first page, with more information available through clicking on hyperlinks or tabs."

Recruiters are presented with an easy to use job builder tool that contains a wealth of standard announcement text that has been written in plain English. The text can be brought into postings at the click of a mouse, but in most cases is also completely editable should a recruiter have to make changes to accommodate a unique agency need or policy. Recruiters also have new tools at their fingertips to quickly format

announcement content including bolding, italics, indents, and the insertion of hyperlinks. A spell checker quickly runs through announcements before they can be posted to check for spelling errors, and includes innovative recruiter and agency level dictionaries that are dynamically updated to include Federal specific terminology and appropriately used acronyms. To assist agencies, a transition period has been set up to allow them to continue using their existing templates until they are comfortable using the new templates.

Since the launch of the new USAJOBS website on August 4, 2003, there have been more than 53,962,800 visits by more than 45,532,160 unique visitors. All tolled, there have been more than 523,699,040 hits with more than 483,450 new resumes created and saved to the website.

"Another key aspect of our ongoing effort to make USAJOBS more useful to agencies and users alike is that we've linked our customer service staff with the technical developers to better facilitate implementation of comments from recruiters and job seekers" Director James added. "This linkage provides a way for us to ensure that common complaints or suggestions can be implemented quickly."

The USAJOBS website is ranked highly by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) approval rating system. Before the site was redesigned last year, the site rated 71 on a scale of 100. Since the redesign and subsequent improvements, USAJOBS scores an average rating of 75 or better and according to ACSI, compares favorably with private sector job search sites.

The enhanced USAJOBS website, www.usajobs.opm.gov, is one of many initiatives developed to attract the best and brightest to the federal work force. Part of President Bush's Management Agenda e-Government initiative - Recruitment One-Stop - USAJOBS consolidates federal jobs in one place, allowing users to spend more time applying for jobs rather than just trying to locate them.

OPM oversees the federal work force and provides the American public with up-to-date employment information. OPM also supports U.S. agencies with personnel services and policy leadership including staffing tools, guidance on labor-management relations and programs to improve work force performance.

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Food For Thought:

No one can go back and make a brand new start. Anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.